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**COMITE INTER-EGLISES
SUR LES DROITS DE
L'HOMME EN AMERIQUE LATINE**

suite 201, 40 St. Clair Ave. East Toronto, Ontario, M4T 1M9 Tel.(416) 921-4152

CANADIAN POLICY AND CENTRAL AMERICA:

RENEWING THE DIALOGUE

A BRIEF TO:

THE HONOURABLE ALLAN J. MACEachEN
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

JUNE 12, 1984



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ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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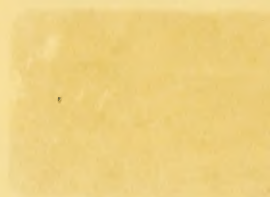
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June 12, 1984

* * * * *

We are pleased at this time to continue the dialogue regarding Canadian policy and Central America. Rumours of war are ever strong. Steps toward peace and justice seem ever faint. The urgency and the opportunity for decisive action is greater than ever.

This brief comes in the context of continuing exchange between representatives of the Canadian churches, and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Hon. Allan MacEachen, and government officials. Following our detailed conversations on the occasion of the presentation of the inter-church brief of October 11th, 1983 and our major brief on human rights of January 24th, we received the Minister's detailed reply, dated March 28th, 1984. Church representatives participated in the briefing for the Minister and his officials just prior to the April visit to the United States, Colombia and Central America, and in the debriefing with departmental officials following the return. Based on these conversations and on the Minister's reply of March 28th, the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America is now able to make a considered and detailed response. In appropriate sections information has been solicited from sister ecumenical bodies.

We wish first to offer the appreciation of the Inter-Church Committee and its member churches and religious orders for the ongoing exchange at the highest levels regarding Canadian policy. Further, we wish to note and affirm initiatives which the Minister has undertaken since our meeting of

October 11th, 1983, in particular the repeated positive affirmation by the Canadian government of the Contadora efforts for peace, the extension of lines of credit to the government of Nicaragua and the extensive visit to the U.S. capital and the region by the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

These steps can become a foundation for a more extensive and active role for Canada in a "new continental relationship" ¹ in which Canada's initiatives for peace, reconciliation and economic development will be welcomed. We note the encouragement given in this regard by the President of Mexico, Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, during his recent visit to Canada. ² Similar encouragement seems to have been offered during the various stops on the recent trip to Colombia and Central America. As Prime Minister Trudeau and President de la Madrid noted, moral support for peace is not enough; countries concerned must act more concretely and actively. Self-determination and freedom from interference, particularly of a military nature, must be assured. ³

The Nature of our Concern: Justice

A detailed restatement of our basis for concern is unnecessary. In our October 11th brief the Canadian churches stated "internal justice undergirded by recognition of self-determination is the essential foundation for peace." The priority of justice is reinforced by our knowledge of the suffering and the hope of our sisters and brothers in Central America. The Latin American Council of Churches recently gave fresh expression to this conviction:

"We reaffirm our support to our sister churches in the region and we join with all men and women of good will who envision and struggle for a new heaven and a new earth where the justice of God will dwell (2 Peter 3:13). These peoples have borne untold suffering and their cry on behalf of peace is coupled with their ardent desire for full liberation." ⁴

War

Today, the reality of war is well-known to Nicaraguan citizens of border provinces, to Salvadorean citizens in many regions, to hundreds of thousands of refugees and to the poor who see their suffering grow, while military suppliers and hierarchies prosper. In October, we noted "massive increases in military aid, military presence and resort to military formulas" on the part of the United States of America, the predominant power in the region, in its response to the intense problems of the countries concerned. That trend has become more ominous in the months since. As Hedrick Smith pointed out in the New York Times of April 23, 1984, "The Pentagon is now in a position

¹ Joint communique of the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States of Mexican States, May 8, 1984.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Letter from Mexico", statement by the Board of Directors of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), March 12-16, 1984. As translated and published in Latinamerica Press, 19 April, 1984.

to assume a combat role in Central America.... The Defense Department has achieved this state of readiness over the last year through the coordinated buildup of United States⁵ forces in the region and construction of new military installations." Side by side with the military buildup has come the rapid increase of the presence, resources and activities of covert operations administered by the United States Central Intelligence Agency. As recently recognized in the judgement of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, these activities have already resulted in a number of acts of war. We have no reason to believe that the current trend will be halted without concerned action by citizens of the United States itself and by the international community.

Behind these works of war lies a belligerent attitude and policy. In testimony before the Sub-Committee on Western Hemispheric Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Rev. J. Bryan Hehir of the United States Catholic Conference stated on March 20, 1984, "too often U.S. policy, in its daily measures, seems fixated on military pressures, coercive moves and the role of threat and intimidation. Such a policy has little potential to grasp the fragile possibilities for peace; it has great potential to reinforce the dangers of regional war." ⁶

Peace

In repeated statements, the Minister for External Affairs and other members of the current government of Canada, have stressed the importance of peace, of political and diplomatic solutions to conflicts which are assuming ever more military proportions. We heartily endorse this preference. Further in testimony before the U.S. Senate, Father Hehir pointed out that "the dynamic of U.S. policy is not sensitive to the diplomatic potential of the moment... realizing our diplomatic potential means placing the political resolution of the Central American conflict ahead of military objectives - it requires a diplomatic strategy in which the political perspective controls military measures." ⁷ The implications for Canadian action are clear. As the Minister's associate in the House of Commons, Mr. Maurice Dupras, M.P., stated recently in Washington D.C., "Canada would be doing a great disservice, not only to itself, but also the Latin Americans and the American people, if it did not avail itself of every opportunity to put pressure on the present administration in Washington while offering constructive alternatives to the continued escalation of violence." ⁸

⁵ Hedrick Smith, "U.S. Latin Force in Place if Needed, Officials Report" The New York Times, April 23, 1984.

⁶ Testimony of Reference J. Bryan Hehir for the United States Catholic Conference, before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 20, 1983 p. 3-4.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Maurice Dupras, Depute de Labelle, Notes for an address for a dialogue on "Canada, the United States and Latin America", to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., April 30th, 1984
"Canada's Political and Security Interests in Latin America and the Caribbean."

This duty is made even more vital by the evidence of the extent to which the U.S. administration not only is failing to take advantage of the diplomatic and political potential of the moment, but actively undermines the cause of peace. In their March 28th pastoral letter, the directors of the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua wrote "we are anguished to see how the North American government ignores pro-peace efforts such as that of the Contadora group, as well as the invitations to dialogue from the Nicaraguan government and the solidarity of friendly nations throughout the world." 9

There is evidence that through diplomatic delay and obfuscation, as well as through overt and covert military acts, the United States administration has sought to weaken and undermine Contadora. In addition, there are the words of the President of the United States in his May 9th, 1984 address on Central America, which convinced many that his administration seeks nothing less than the overthrow of the present government and state system in the Republic of Nicaragua. The short visit of Secretary of State Schultz to Managua airport, June 1st, while opening a long-delayed conversation leaves United States support for counter-revolutionary forces against Nicaragua intact. 10

In our briefing paper of March 29th, 1984, we suggested that there are two fundamental conversations which must be advanced in the cause of peace in Central America. 11 The Contadora process regarding conflicts between states must be pushed forward with concrete steps. Canadian leadership vis-a-vis the United States administration and in concert with other sympathetic non-Contadora states is vital. At the same time dialogue leading to negotiations in the case of the chief internal struggle in the region -- that in El Salvador -- is long overdue. As the bishops of El Salvador stated in their joint pastoral letter of February 2nd, 1984:

"With the Pope we have repeated our conviction that true dialogue is not only the only possible solution but above all the only human and Christian one. We cannot accept an illusory peace built on the corpses of more Salvadoreans." 12

9 Convencion Bautista de Nicaragua, "A pastoral letter for our Baptist family and for our Christian sisters and brothers throughout the world." Managua, March 28th, 1984.

10 See for example, Stella Calloni and Rafael Cribari, La "Guerra Encubierta" Contra Contadora. Panama, Centro de Capacitacion Social, 1984. Also "Mexican Official Believes Contadora was Undermined" The News, Mexico City, May 13th, 1984, p.1; and Council on Hemispheric Affairs, "Contadora's faint pulse of life being drowned by administration's death declarations", Washington, May 14th, 1984. See also Francis X. Clines, "Nicaragua policy is affirmed by U.S. after Schultz Trip" The New York Times, Sunday, June 3, 1984, p.1.

11 Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America, Outline Briefing Notes, "Canada, Contadora and Central America," March 29th, 1984

12 Joint Pastoral Letter, "Called to be Artisans of Peace," San Salvador, February 2nd, 1984, as quoted in J. Bryan Hehir, op. cit. p.9.

As the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops stated on March 22nd, 1984, "Up to now we are forced to declare that the government of El Salvador and its ally, the Americans, have opted for a military solution and have been slow to negotiate while the opposing parties have, on numerous occasions and again recently, made public their position and their willingness to negotiate." 13

As we stated on March 29th, both the international and Salvadorean lines of negotiation "offer ample scope for Canadian creativity."

The Current Crisis

The danger of a full regional war is more apparent and likely today than at the time of our October 11th brief. Continuous military conflict, "covert war" and grotesque violations of human rights are a present reality.

The international outcry against the mining of the harbours of Nicaragua has not ended the 'dirty' war against the government and people of that country. Verbal tirades from the highest levels in the United States have been coupled with direct and indirect sponsorship of "contra" warfare, provocative acts including repeated incursions into Nicaraguan airspace, and sustained economic pressure. While supporting the self-determination of Nicaragua and opposing the dirty war, the international community, and Canada in particular, must increase steps to end the military danger to Nicaraguan independence while assisting more energetically its economic recovery and development. The process of general elections together with the relaxation of the state of emergency ought to encourage further acts of solidarity.

The recent elections in El Salvador have not reduced the internal conflict nor the complexities of a solution. While many elements in the United States have hailed the victory of Napoleon Duarte, others have pointed out not only the sizeable United States financial investment in the elections themselves and the observer process, but the direct subsidy through the C.I.A. of some of the parties which took part in the elections, including the victorious one. 14 Further, human rights sources point out that under the previous administration led by Duarte, killings and other violations of human rights involving government forces reached peaks higher than at any other point since the coup of 1979. 15 Inter-Church Committee personnel have visited El Salvador in 1984 and can confirm in detail the grave situation of human rights at this time.

13 Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs, "A Message on the Fourth Anniversary of the Assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador," Ottawa, March 22nd, 1984.

14 See for example, Steven R. Weisman, "U.S. Admits Assisting "Moderate" Groups, Candidates in El Salvador." The News, Mexico City. May 11, 1984. p.1.

15 Figures presented by the Commission for Human Rights of El Salvador (CDHES) are as follows: assassinations of civil population 1979 - 1,149; 1980 - 13,194; 1981 - 16,537; 1982 - 9,507; 1983 - 5,654. "Over 600

The long-suspected but recently published evidence of direct United States subsidy, organization and encouragement of death squads through the C.I.A. and Salvadorean intelligence and security police institutions, traces the roots of the cancer of repression back to Washington. 16 While the conviction of the assassins of U.S. religious women and the export overseas of a handful of offending or suspected military officers may be an overdue if very limited bow to justice, they do little to root out this deep seated evil. The fact that the timing of these events can be interpreted as necessary to assure the approval of further U.S. military aid can hardly be expected to bring rest to the spirit of the martyrs.

The continuation of war in El Salvador has been accompanied by increased involvement of United States forces and equipment. U.S. forces have been flying air reconnaissance missions over El Salvador. Eye witnesses report heavy bombing of civilian areas in the 'liberated zones' of El Salvador from U.S. supplied A-37 Dragonfly fighter planes, together with machine-gunning from U.S. supplied Huey helicopters. The Salvadorean Air Force has used Red Cross humanitarian activities to locate and attack groups of displaced people in areas of conflict. 17 Such activities require condemnation and pressure for change.

The necessity of an energetic response to any opening for dialogue between the government in San Salvador and major representative political forces including the FDR-FMLN is obvious. We hope that Canada will undertake an initiative to bring about such dialogue.

The transformation of Honduras into a second Canal Zone, as a base for U.S. and other foreign forces, has reinforced already evident trends to militarization and repression in that Republic. The recent overthrow of General Alvarez has not reduced dangers over the long-term. The fledgeling democracy in Honduras, restricted and weakened from the start by military conditions, is drowning in the flood of military aid and foreign forces.

cont'd from previous page ...officials of Duarte's Christian Democratic Party -- many of them local mayors -- were murdered by the paramilitary bands during Duarte's reign as president. In addition, the party's chairman publicly has stated that no death squad murders that occurred before Duarte's official inauguration will be investigated." Council on Hemispheric Affairs, "Reagan Speech: an appeal to continue a classified war", Washington, May 9th, 1984.

16 In this regard see Washington Office on Latin America, An El Salvador Chronology, Death Squads as a Political Tool. February, 1984, Washington D.C., and Dennis Volman, "Salvador death squads, a CIA connection?" The Christian Science Monitor, May 8th, 1984.

17 see Hedrick Smith, op. cit., and Jenny Pearce, "Analysis of the Military, Political and Economic Aggressions against Nicaragua and the Other Peoples of Central America," a paper presented to the International Conference on Nicaragua and for Peace in Central America, Lisbon, Portugal May, 1984. See also Chris Hedges, "El Salvador military said to bomb Red Cross aid sites", Christian Science Monitor, Boston, March 26th, 1984, and Chris Hedges, "El Salvador air war escalates, populated areas targeted," National Catholic Reporter, April 27th, 1984.

The announced plans for U.S.-sponsored military manoeuvres in Honduras through 1988 indicate that militarization and the erosion of national self-determination will continue. 18 In repeated and increasingly large scale demonstrations Hondurans have indicated that they resent the overwhelming American presence in their country, and the slide to repressive policies. 19 The domestic human rights situation continues to deteriorate. This, in part, results from growing conflict between impoverished peasants and the wealthy landowners in a country where the government's inadequate, even non-existent, development plans result in increasing poverty for the majority. On April 19th, for example, a group of eighty peasant families from the Department of Francisco Morazan were attacked by land owners and security forces leaving three dead, three wounded and three detained. The Honduran Human Rights Committee (CODEH) and prestigious U.S. human rights organizations continue to report evidence of emerging patterns of disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests and extra-judicial executions in 1983 and 1984.

In the case of Guatemala, the internal human rights situation remains the most serious in the region. Through recent ICCHRLA visits and through the testimony of refugees, including an escapee from a clandestine prison now resident in Canada, 20 details of torture, kidnappings, detentions and disappearances in the thousands during the early part of 1984 have been recorded by the ICCHRLA. Continued massacres in the countryside, and of the responsibility of the armed forces themselves for these violations have been documented by the ICCHRLA in conversations with religious personnel working in several areas of Guatemala. The refugee flow and the weight upon Mexico in particular continue to be matters of priority humanitarian concern. The more than seventy documented incursions by Guatemalan military forces into Mexico, including the April 30th attack on a refugee camp several kilometres inside Mexico resulting in grotesque tortures and deaths 21 should provoke strong international reaction, as well as encouragement and support for Mexico itself.

18 see "Hasta 1988 realizara E.U. maniobras con Honduras," in Uno Mas Uno, Mexico City, May 13th, 1984.

19 "Workers in Honduras and El Salvador Protest Policies, U.S. Military Presence," International Herald-Tribune, Paris,

20 April, 1984 Testimony of Guatemalan Trade Unionist, Alvaro Rena Sosa, prepared and translated by the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America.

21 Comunique from the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, May 31st, 1984.

Urgency

Each one of the factors briefly outlined above is an additional argument for decisive and energetic action by the Canadian government. While many of the factors listed are negative, we are conscious that within the peoples of Central America there is a positive will and spirit which yearns for social justice in domestic politics and for peaceful relations with neighbours. We encourage policy initiatives by Canada which will not only combat the negative war clouds of the present, but free the potential for reconstruction and reconciliation which exists.

With the objective of furthering such initiatives, we herewith outline our response to the External Affairs' document of March 28th, 1984. Where appropriate, we attempt to take into consideration events and declarations which have occurred in the intervening weeks. To facilitate ease of approach we note in brief the original recommendations of our presentation of October 11th, 1983, followed by the government's reply and our present response. We follow the system of thematic organization which was used in the original brief.

POLITICAL INITIATIVES

A. Regional Peace Initiatives

In October we called for Canadian opposition to military and naval manoeuvres and the construction of new military bases in Honduras (P1), continued and energetic encouragement of Contadora peace initiatives (P2) and approaches to friendly states by Canada to seek cooperative action to reinforce peace initiatives (P3).

The Minister replied in March citing Canadian activities in support of Contadora including letters to participating presidents of states from Prime Minister Trudeau, conversations with foreign ministers at the United Nations and repeated public statements in favour of Contadora. The Minister also stated that the Canadian government has reiterated to the U.S. and Honduras its serious concern about the escalation of conflict with Nicaragua and regarding U.S. involvement in military operations against Nicaragua.

We are encouraged by continued statements by the Canadian government which serve to reinforce peaceful solutions in Central America. 22 The recognition in the May 8th, Mexican-Canadian joint communique "that moral support for

22 Among these are: the joint statement with Mexico's foreign minister late in 1983; the exchange of statements with Colombia's foreign minister in February, 1984; the Minister's comments at various points on his visit to Central America, in April, 1984; comments by the Assistant Deputy Minister, M. Claude Charland in Washington, D.C. April 30th, 1984; and paragraph 24 of the Joint Communique of the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United Mexican States in Ottawa, May 8th, 1984.

Contadora is not enough" is particularly important. The signing of a joint declaration by the foreign ministers of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, with the assistance of the Contadora Group, on May 15th, 1984 in Panama is a welcome step. 22a

We believe the Canadian government can take leadership in concrete initiatives. In October and again in the briefing with the Minister in March, we encouraged the government to put together a cooperative effort among sympathetic powers in support of the Contadora effort. The clear statements of the Prime Minister of Ireland regarding this process and against current United States policy confirms that there are other states which could be very sympathetic to such joint pressure. 23 We recommend that the Canadian government take the leadership in securing a joint declaration of sympathetic states which would call for a reduction and ultimate elimination of foreign military advisors, military bases and forces from Central America and an immediate reduction in foreign military aid to the parties in the conflict in the region. Measures for joint and forceful presentation of such a statement to governments providing such aid should also be developed on a cooperative basis.

The Canadian government has indicated a desire to enter into a more direct relationship with the working groups of the Contadora process, and has specifically mentioned the possibility of assisting with the "modalities of verification." 24 What progress has been made to establish a regular and systematic mechanism of communication with Contadora itself? What means has the Canadian government developed, or does it plan to develop, for more direct relationship with the working groups? What contribution is the Canadian government proposing to make regarding the development of "modalities of verification" for any peace initiative? Can you distinguish between these plans and the frequent rumours regarding Canadian peace-keeping or policing forces?

Canadian government statements have indicated support for the broader economic conversation related to Contadora through the Action Committee for the Economic and Social Development of Central America (CADESCA). 25 What technical or material support is Canada planning to contribute to or through this particular effort toward planning effective means to alleviate the economic and social conditions which have led to conflict in Central America?

As we have pointed out above, the conflict between the objectives of Contadora and the large military manoeuvres led by the United States in Honduras, together with acts of war both covert and overt, has increased in recent months.

22a Declaracion con junta, (D'Escoto/Gutierrez), Panama, 15 de Mayo de 1984.

23 R.W. Apple, Jr., "Ireland's Premier Chides President," The New York Times, June 4th, 1984. p.1.

24 Join Communique of May 8th, 1984.

25 most recently in the Joint Communique of May 8th, 1984.

Given the objective conditions, the stress placed on these military moves in our October brief and in other communications since that time, we are surprised at the relative lack of emphasis in the Minister's reply regarding U.S. sponsored militarization. In conversations with the Minister we have suggested that the Canadian government seek to make its opposition to increased militarization better and more directly known to the U.S. Congress and the U.S. people, through a public address by the Minister from a prominent platform in the United States or by other appropriate means. We renew that suggestion.

With regard to the Honduran government's participation in further militarization, what response did that government give the Minister during his recent visit in Tegucigalpa, and what further action is planned by the Canadian government to dramatize opposition to the rapidly increased militarization of that republic?

B. Nicaragua

In October we urged the Canadian government to condemn the funding, training, and encouragement of the "contras" in their war against Nicaragua as well as the idea of "destabilization" of Nicaragua by the United States. (P4)

The Minister replied in March noting "intense debate" over the 'contras', Canadian government support of General Assembly condemnation of attacks on Nicaraguan sovereignty and reiteration of "its serious concern" about the escalation of conflict and reports of U.S. involvement.

We are in receipt of increasing evidence of direct United States orchestration of the war against Nicaragua, particularly through the use of the C.I.A. This evidence includes, for instance, reports of C.I.A. operatives at the highest levels of ARDE in San Jose, Costa Rica, and provision of pilots, technicians and amphibious commando units. 26

The Minister expresses concern in his March reply, but there is no clear indication of a public condemnation of what has become known as the "covert" or dirty war against Nicaragua. We renew our recommendation that the Canadian government publicly condemn the funding, training and encouragement of the 'contras' in their war against Nicaragua as well as the policy of "destabilization" of Nicaragua by the United States. We encourage the government to make such a declaration in a form that will be clearly understood by the administration, congress and citizenry of the United States of America.

In line with this concern we would appreciate confirmation from the Minister on the following points: was Canadian official opposition to the covert war clearly stated during the recent visit to Honduras and to Nicaragua; was opposition to the cooperation and support of Honduran government forces in

26 Martha Honey, "The CIA digs in with the contras," The Sunday Times, London, England, April 22nd, 1984.

this covert war made clear to the Honduran officials; was the operation of 'contra' forces from Costa Rica similarly questioned by the Minister during conversations with government officials in San Jose; did the government of Honduras commit itself to undertake any steps to prohibit and prevent the operation of the contras from its territory and to take immediate steps toward peace through negotiated settlements with Nicaragua; if not, what steps is the Canadian government willing to take to encourage such a change of policy on the part of the Honduran government; did the Minister express clear Canadian support for Nicaraguan peace initiatives during his stay in Managua and/or make offers of good offices or assistance in bringing about negotiations with Honduras or the United States?

In October we renewed our call on the Canadian government to open an embassy in Managua.

In the Minister's reply in March you indicate that because of financial pressures the Department has decided to reinforce existing posts rather than open a new post in Managua. However, in your interview with "As it Happens" you admitted that "it would be better if we had a stronger presence in Nicaragua." 27 Further, the Canadian ambassador to Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador, his excellency F.M. Filleul, has written recently that "Mr. MacEachen stated publicly that the question of opening a diplomatic mission in Managua was under consideration, and that there were no political reasons for not doing so." 28

We welcome the initiative of the Secretary of State for External Affairs in visiting Nicaragua in April, 1984. We believe it was an important signal to all that Canada intends to continue normal and mutually beneficial relations with Nicaragua.

Nevertheless we remain convinced that the considerable differences in perceptions, media and political atmosphere between San Jose and Managua, together with the increasing complexity of events in the region, and the difficulty of Canadian embassy officials based in one country serving three distinct and different nations, all support our recommendation that the Canadian government move to the immediate establishment of an embassy in Nicaragua. Indications of the scarcity of financial resources for such an initiative ring rather hollow beside the recent news of a considerable concentration of resources on a monumental new structure for the Canadian Embassy in Washington.

C. El Salvador

In October we called on the Canadian government to reiterate publicly and directly its opposition to foreign military aid to parties in conflict in El Salvador. (P7)

The Minister's reply in March reports that this has been done bilaterally and at the United Nations.

27 External Affairs Transcripts, CBC Radio, As it Happens, April 12th, 1984.

28 F.M. Filleul to Mr. Timothy Draimin, Executive Secretary of CAPA, March 30th, 1984.

While we write, demands for drastically increased flows of foreign military assistance are being considered in the U.S. Congress. United States-provided planes are involved in bombing raids; the extent of direct involvement of U.S. personnel in these and other activities is a matter of increasing debate.

We do not believe that such military aid can do anything but deepen and broaden the conflict, the number of deaths and the spread of destruction. Can it do anything but sustain a system characterized by gross injustices and grotesque and continuing violations of human rights?

We therefore urge the Government of Canada to once again renew its public opposition to foreign military aid to El Salvador. Further, as we have noted in conversations with you in order that the American Congress and American people understand Canada's position in this and related matters, we believe it would be most useful for the Minister to take the opportunity of voicing these concerns from a worthy platform in Washington or some suitable alternative location in the United States.

In October we urged the Canadian government to support the process of dialogue leading to negotiations in El Salvador. (P8)

The Minister's reply in March is rather brief on this point, stating that while Canada supports fully a process of dialogue, it is in no position to advocate negotiations that parties do not wish to have.

We renew our recommendation that the Canadian government take initiatives to engage the government of El Salvador and representative political forces including the FDR-FMLN in dialogue leading to negotiations in El Salvador.

The urgency of dialogue leading to negotiations in El Salvador is increasingly apparent. We believe that the opposition FDR-FMLN has repeatedly stated its interest in such negotiations. 29 On the eve of the Minister's departure for Central America, church representatives discussed with him the importance of initiatives on the part of Canada and other regional powers to bring the parties to the conflict in El Salvador together. What initiatives is the Government of Canada prepared to take in this regard, given the expression of interest by the FDR-FMLN? Has the Minister been able to ascertain the interest of other nations in encouraging such a dialogue? What steps could be taken in the coming six months to bring talks about?

D. Visit to Central America

In October we urged the Minister to visit the region. (P9) In March we were pleased to participate in helping the Minister prepare for such a visit, and in debriefing regarding its results. We are glad that this important

29 The Globe and Mail, May 28th, 1984.

initiative has been taken, and trust that it will be followed by a series of further creative and concrete Canadian government initiatives.

HUMAN RIGHTS

In October we renewed the recommendation that regular annual parliamentary hearings regarding human rights and Canadian foreign policy be held by the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence or a sub-committee thereof. (HR1)

In his March reply the Minister states that such a review "would probably not add much," that the Department implicitly examines the question in any case, and that it is up to Parliament to decide whether it wants hearings or not.

Since we made the recommendation, various groups in the Canadian human rights community have picked up the theme, most recently with a suggestion from the parliamentary group on Soviet Jewry, in the House of Commons. 30

The Minister's answer ignores the fact that the business of the Standing Committee on External Affairs is defined in large part by the majority party of which he is a member. The will of Parliament is also dominated by the same forces and the Government of which he is a part. The holding of hearings or not is therefore dependent on the initiative of the Government and the Minister.

We believe that annual hearings would assure coherence in our foreign policy, in insuring that human rights will be taken account of in the various facets of international policy: political relations, foreign aid and international financial institutions, export development credits, etc. While a good deal of reputable and reliable information is available to the government through international institutions, the assessment of Canadian human rights bodies from time to time breaks new ground and examines details of particular relevance to the Canadian people. Further, such hearings would provide an opportunity to the Department of External Affairs to explain publicly the criteria on which it bases decisions and elicit advice on the improvement of policy. We therefore renew our recommendation that regular annual parliamentary hearings on human rights and foreign policy be initiated at the earliest possible instance.

In October we recommended that the Government of Canada initiate and support strong condemnation of human rights violations in El Salvador and Guatemala, and publicly cite the dangerous trends in Honduras. (HR 12)

The Minister in March outlined Canadian support for human rights resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly and stated that the Canadian government seeks resolutions that could modify less than satisfactory performance from various governments. The Minister further suggests that the situation in Honduras does not warrant such measures at this time.

30 House of Commons Debates, May 15th, 1984, p. 3731-3732.

The ICCHRLA wishes to acknowledge and express appreciation for initiatives taken or supported by the Government of Canada at the 1983 General Assembly of the United Nations and the 40th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Extensive measures for the limitation of human rights violations and the development of internal reconciliation were recommended for El Salvador and important urgencies added to international concern regarding Guatemala.

Recent visits by representatives of the ICCHRLA as well as documentary evidence reinforces continued concern regarding both countries. The future of Canadian government relations with the United Nations Commission actions has been put in question by the ending of Canada's membership in the body, and its new role as observer. We recommend the appointment of a high level and experienced delegation of observers with a mandate for active involvement as observer at the 41st session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Further we recommend the renewal and extension of strong positions in favour of human rights in Guatemala and El Salvador at the 1984 General Assembly session. The churches, through the ICCHRLA, renew their commitment to making evidence and advice available to government representatives for this purpose.

With regard to the situation of human rights in Honduras, we note with appreciation the Minister's expressed concern regarding this matter in the March 29th briefing. Our concern is not to elicit action of the order necessary to deal with the grotesque situations in Guatemala and El Salvador, but to seek action appropriate to prevent a further deterioration in Honduras. Patterns of disappearances, political assassinations and repression already present must not be permitted to become greater. We have therefore strongly suggested to the Minister that direct communication be undertaken with relevant human rights bodies in Honduras, and we renew the recommendation made in October that the Canadian representative to the General Assembly cite Honduras as a matter of concern regarding human rights in this year's intervention in debate.

In October we recommended that concern regarding human rights violations ought to continue to be the basis of Canadian government bilateral relations with El Salvador and Guatemala. (HR3)

In his March reply the Minister indicates that the evident testimony of Canadian concern is the continuation of the suspension of bilateral development assistance to these countries.

The churches through the ICCHRLA wish to commend the Canadian government regarding the continuation of the suspension of bilateral aid, as a continuing public recognition of gross and systematic violations of human rights in Guatemala and El Salvador. We believe that this suspension ought to be continued and, in fact, reinforced. (See sections regarding aid, below.)

In October we recommended that the Canadian government encourage its diplomatic personnel to initiate dialogue with independent Guatemalan and Salvadorean human rights agencies.

In his March reply the Minister indicates that such contact already exists.

The churches through the ICCHRLA welcomes the willingness of the Minister and officials of his Department to consult with visiting human rights representatives. We remain concerned, however, particularly about the case of Guatemala, where it is virtually impossible within the country to speak freely with representatives of leading independent human rights organizations. We would therefore recommend that regular meetings between Canadian embassy personnel and representatives of such bodies as the Ecumenical Justice and Peace Committee and the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission be arranged in Mexico City, where each of these bodies have permanent offices.

We wish to reiterate our fundamental conviction that the human rights violations which elicit these and other responses will not end until the present trend of militarization and reinforcement of repressive forces is decisively reversed. There remains an intimate link between our concern for human rights and the various recommendations in this response which affect the reduction of militarization and repression, the building of peace and reconciliation, the development of justice through authentic economic and social development.

AID *

Guatemala and El Salvador

In October we called for an extension of the suspension of all forms of Canadian bilateral government aid to Guatemala and El Salvador, noting that the rapid increase in the use of Mission Administered Funds (M.A.F.) suggested they were being used as a substitute channel for bilateral transfers. (A1)

The Minister replied in March that the suspension continues and that the churches' remarks regarding M.A.F. were "disquieting" since such funds had a \$350,000. limit in most countries and went primarily to community groups.

As stated in HR 3 above, we commend the Canadian government for continued suspension of bilateral aid. However, we wish to reaffirm our concern at the rapid increase of M.A.F. for both El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980-1983 period. We note that in FY 1980/81 Guatemala received \$20,000. compared to \$350,000. in FY 1982/83. Likewise, El Salvador received \$60,000. in FY 1980/81 compared to \$275,000. in FY 1982/83. 31

Thus, while official bilateral aid to both countries has been suspended, the substantial increase in M.A.F. has enabled the Canadian government to soften

* The section on aid in this brief has been prepared with information provided by denominational aid agencies of member bodies of the ICCHRLA and by ecumenical bodies including the Inter-Church Fund for International Development and the Task Force on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility.

31 CIDA documents for M.A.F. for Central America, 1980-1983.

or dilute the effect of that policy by maintaining an important alternative funding channel. Direct government funding to these countries, including Mission Administered Funds, should be suspended.

We also question the statement made in the Minister's March reply, that "mission administered funds are directed mainly towards communities, cooperative groups, and NGO's and do not endanger these bodies when they are involved in authentic development pursuits such as introduction of electricity, construction of rural schools, introduction of potable water, etc."

The Canadian churches have defined development as "a process of continuous change by which any country or sector of population seeks to advance itself both materially and spiritually by:

- a) transforming its productive structure to serve its needs more adequately
- b) establishing new and more just social relationships
- c) acquiring adequate and appropriate political and administrative institutions
- d) renewing its own culture to achieve a better quality of life. ³²

When concern for the value of each human life exists in community, religious, financial and governmental structures, the possibility of authentic development exists. Such development seeks to provide for the majority of people items such as sufficient food and access to land to grow food, opportunity for education, adequate shelter, good health, genuine participation in decision making in the community and nation, etc. ³³

In the light of the massive violations of human rights and the level of repression directed against grass roots sectors (peasants, workers, agrarian reform officials, trade union leaders) in El Salvador and Guatemala, we seriously question: a) the extent to which "authentic development pursuits" can be carried out today in Guatemala and El Salvador and b) the Minister's statement that M.A.F. does not endanger at least some local non-governmental bodies, in these countries.

We wonder what understanding of "authentic development" permits the Canadian government to perceive it as possible in the above mentioned countries? We believe, given the extraordinary political and military situation existing in these countries, that Canadian government personnel should not become directly involved in the life of local non-governmental organizations in Guatemala or El Salvador. Communications from a number of our partners in

³² Definition used by the Inter-Church Fund for International Development

³³ A full copy of development criteria is appended for your information. See Ten Days Tabloid on Central America, 1984, p. 3., published by the Ten Days for World Development Program of the Inter-Church Committee for World Development Education, which includes Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian and United churches.

the region regarding, for example, unexpected and unsolicited visits from Embassy personnel, have led us to the conviction that direct Canadian government relations with local non-governmental organizations in Guatemala and El Salvador should be avoided.

Honduras

In October, we recommended the reclassification of Honduras as a "project country" rather than a "core country" given its militarization and collaboration in aggressive actions against its neighbour with deterioration in human rights. (A2)

The Minister replied in March that the argument that changes in Canadian aid policy to Honduras could influence the Honduran government or military to alter their approach was unrealistic, and that there was more to be gained from being present in Honduras than absent.

We reiterate our conviction that authentic development at the grass roots level is become increasingly difficult because of the militarization of Honduras.

We doubt Honduras' current ability to absorb and effectively utilize the large amount of development assistance currently available to it under CIDA's Country Focus Program. We understand that the Canadian government shares this concern, having observed that Honduras has limited absorptive capacity for development assistance, having had to reallocate much of its technical and administrative resources to United States economic and military assistance programs. We therefore believe that the Country Focus Funds for Honduras should be reallocated to aid programs in other Central American countries such as Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

We noted the Minister's statement that Canadian development assistance "is not designed as a tool to reward or punish foreign governments." We question whether this policy is uniformly applied. The Minister himself during his visit to Costa Rica, stated with regard to Canadian aid to Nicaragua, that the government would be more agreeable to increasing its aid if the Nicaraguan government were able to make progress in meeting the original goals of the revolution. 34

We also seriously question the extent to which Canadian development assistance to Honduras meets the espoused development goals which the Department of External Affairs states "is directed at resolving grass roots problems and socio-economic infrastructure deficiencies."

We remain unconvinced that the bulk of Country Focus Funds, directed as they are at large-scale infrastructural projects are in fact reaching the poorest of the poor in Honduras!

34 Transcripts of press conferences by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Department of External Affairs.

Nicaragua

In October we recommended that Nicaragua be designated as a "core country" and given priority for greatly increased Canadian official aid. (A3)

The Minister in his March reply responded by outlining in detail the various funds already allocated to the five Central American countries, arguing that the churches had underestimated the actual aid given by the Canadian government to Nicaragua, and indicating that the Government had allocated \$18,000,000. in lines of credit for agriculture and potable water for Nicaragua, \$13,000,000. of which had been approved in January, 1984.

We wish to commend the Minister and the Canadian government for the decision to extend \$18 million in two lines of credit to Nicaragua early in 1984. While not equivalent to bilateral grants, this assistance is a welcome opening in a time of crisis and a signal of Canadian willingness to assist the Nicaraguan revolution.

At the same time we consider it important to make the following clarifications regarding overall aid flown from Canada to the region:

- 1) Figures cited in the Minister's March reply regarding aid to the five Central American countries (page 5) do not take into account the Honduras Country Focus Commitments made during the last two fiscal years. These would increase considerable Canadian government aid commitment figures to that country. We understand that during the 1980-83 period, CIDA committed a total of \$42.7 million bilateral aid to Honduras as compared to \$5.45 million bilateral aid for Nicaragua. 35
- 2) Figures cited in the Minister's March reply regarding Canada's official development assistance to Nicaragua (page 6) are misleading. Government to government projects, food aid and Mission Administered Funds (official bilateral aid), are limited to a total of \$5,454,000. The bulk of CIDA funds listed as transferred to Nicaragua (\$7,030,000) has been co-financed by the private sector in projects presented as a result of church and non-governmental organization activity with the Nicaraguan people.

When Canadian government officials have stated that it was the Government's intention to continue the level of bilateral aid to Nicaragua at current levels, was it the level of \$5.45 million over several years to which they were referring?

We reiterate our recommendation made in October, 1983, which repeated recommendations made to the Canadian government over the past five years, that Nicaragua should be designated a core or country focus country and that it should be given immediate priority for greatly increased levels of Canadian

35 CIDA's Year in Review, 1982-83, Canadians in the Third World. pp77-8. CIDA's statistics indicate \$10.5 million disbursed in FYs 1980-83 for Honduras. The above figures include \$32.2 million committed by CIDA in January, 1983 to the El Cajon Hydro-Electric Dam in Honduras. Regarding Nicaragua, the above figure doesnot include 1983-84 bilateral commitments of \$3 million in food and \$18 million in lines of credit, which would bring the total to \$26.44 million over four years.

official aid. We believe that a further increase in bilateral assistance can be justified on socio-economic and humanitarian grounds. The excellent track record of the Nicaraguan government in delivering aid to the grass roots population makes it a worthy recipient of increased aid allocations. The urgency of transfer of significant aid is reinforced by the crippling attacks against the productive sectors and its ports which Nicaragua has suffered at the hands of the "dirty war" outlined above, and the attempted boycott orchestrated by the United States against Nicaragua's economy and its applications to International Financial Institutions.

It has been asserted in government-non-governmental organization conversations that Canadian non-governmental organizations are funding many more projects in Nicaragua than in other Central American states.

We have already raised fundamental questions regarding the conditions under which authentic development can be said to be possible with regard to several Central American countries at the present conjuncture. However, it should be noted that CIDA's aid figures on a country-by-country basis do not represent total Canadian non-governmental aid commitments to the region, but rather only embody those non-governmental projects which involve CIDA matching funds. Observations based on these figures are therefore founded on a very serious misreading since the Government's data is incomplete. We wish to stress the fact that the Canadian churches have deliberately not sought a CIDA match for many of their projects in El Salvador and Guatemala because our partner agencies have indicated that government monitoring (as a result of the CIDA match) endangers both the project and the lives of the project personnel. We repeat our concern regarding the activities of Canadian embassy personnel in soliciting, promoting and supervising the M.A.F. projects and refer you to our comments under A6 below for further elaboration.

Multilateral Aid

In October we recommended that the Canadian government oppose loans and other technical and financial assistance to International Financial Institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc., to Guatemala and El Salvador which persist in gross and systematic violations of human rights. (A4) (With regard to the International Monetary Fund, our recommendation refers not to the automatic but the discretionary operations of the fund.)

The Minister in March replied that "human rights considerations do not enter in the deliberations of such institutions' decision-making process.", and commented that such international financial organizations "work on the same basis as private banks." Similar points have been made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs in more lengthy correspondence and by his colleague the Minister of Finance, and by the President of CIDA in recent months.

We believe that in keeping with the name of the Inter-American Development Bank, this institution was established - not on the same basis as private banks - but on the understanding that criteria are applied specifically to the "development" contents of its projects. Indeed, the Bank itself has stated:

"The Bank has a goal that 50 per cent of its lending program during the period of the Sixth Replenishment 1983-86, as with previous Replenishment, be orientated directly to the benefit of lower income groups..." 36

It appears therefore that projects funded by the IADB to Guatemala and El Salvador ought to demonstrate that, in addition to their technical soundness and feasibility, their financial viability and perceived economic return, they benefit the poor. If bilateral CIDA projects are suspended because of "the level of violence in those two countries" 37 it seems incongruous that IADB projects would not meet with the same difficulties. A regime which unleashes such repression against its own poor that CIDA personnel cannot be assured of fulfilling its mandate, can also not be trusted to administer development projects that are supposed to benefit that same section of the population. This argument should pertain particularly to Guatemala while additional factors come into play with regard to El Salvador.

It seems to us that even if "development" and human rights are disregarded in the assessment of El Salvadorean projects, questions about their feasibility should be, but are not raised. For example, on November 30th, 1983, the Canadian Executive Director on the IADB supported a loan of \$ US 6 million to the Republic of El Salvador for the construction of the San Marcos bridge over the Lempa River which had been destroyed in this highly contested area during armed conflict in October 1981. The new bridge that Canada approved and helped to fund will be supported by concrete abutments and six concrete piers (instead of the previous single span) with spare beams and end supports to be stored on shore to replace any that may be blown up in renewed fighting. The plans also call for placing a guard tower in the middle and checkpoints at either end, as well as flood-light platforms to guard against water attack. Sooner or later the bridge is likely to be a prime target of the insurgents, thus wasting Canadian development aid.

The IADB credit for the bridge must be interpreted as military aid. Canada, through its co-funding, is now implicated in the civil war on the side of the American backed government. Canada's support for this latest credit appears to represent a shift in its position.

In November 1981, the Canadian Executive Director on the IADB withheld Canadian support for a \$ US 30.8 million credit for the construction of a 200 km. rural road in the conflict area of Chalatenango. At the decision-making session of the Board he raised doubt on a technical point, about whether this particular project could be implemented given the level of conflict there. He said, "I was not satisfied that conditions are sufficiently stable."

36 Letter to the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility, December 23rd, 1983.

37 Letter to Dr. W. Keith Coulter of Ten Days by E. Martel, Director, Caribbean and Central American Relations Division of External Affairs, January 11th, 1984.

However, in July 1982 Canada supported \$ US 66 million in credits for the completion of the San Lorenzo Rio Lempa hydro project, also a constant target of guerrilla activity. Questions in regard to the implementability of the project should have been, but were not raised. Similarly, credits for the San Marcos bridge should have been questioned on technical grounds because roads and bridges are the battleground of El Salvador's civil war. One month later, on January 1st 1984, the Cuscatlan bridge, some 50 km. away was destroyed by Salvadorean guerrillas. This latest casualty of the civil war suggests that it is simply not possible under present conditions to make judgements about the implementability of projects in El Salvador.

A similar case pertaining to El Salvador can be cited in regard to the IMF which does not require development criteria but must observe stringent economic qualifications.

In its July 1981 approval of a \$36 million loan, the IMF not only disregarded El Salvador's human rights record, but broke its own rules regarding the Compensatory Finance Facility. It approved the loan without providing the required balance-of-payments shortfall prediction. The IMF staff had refused to make such a prediction due to the uncertainty of the civil war and the resulting impossibility of predicting a rise in exports. The loan was controversial, but passed because of U.S. insistence. Canada supported the U.S. position. It was opposed by nearly all of the ~~Executive~~ Directors from Western Europe.

Further Compensatory Finance Facility (US \$32.3 million) and Standby loans (US \$45 million) were made in July 1982.

An IMF mid-term review of El Salvador's economic performance was undertaken on May 27th, 1983 and the last \$ US 17 million of the 1982 Standby loan was released. IMF staff again cautioned that contrary to program expectation the situation in El Salvador has worsened because of the civil war and that no recovery in output was anticipated for 1983. Canadian officials at the Department of Finance said that they were concerned about El Salvador's economic performance, but were satisfied that it was doing its best.

The feasibility factor and the assurance that projects can be implemented according to both the IADB and the IMF requirements were disregarded by Canada's Executive Directors when they approved these El Salvadorean projects.

As in Guatemala, so in El Salvador, repression and human rights violations make development and an orderly pursuit of economic activity impossible. We therefore reiterate our previous recommendation that: "The Canadian government oppose loans and other technical and financial assistance in international financial institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, to Guatemala and El Salvador which persist in gross and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

In October we recommended that the Canadian government take energetic steps to prevent transfer of Canadian military and dual purpose equipment to governments engaged in systematic and gross violations of human rights, etc. (A5)

The Minister replied stating that Canada does not export military products to any country of Central America, and indicated that the Twin Otter sale to Guatemala to the Guatemalan airline Aviateca to which we had objected "did not materialize and is not pursued by the parties." We know that negotiations between de Havilland and the Guatemalans "have broken off and that at the present time neither party is pursuing a contract." 38 We would however be anxious to learn whether the August, 1983 export permit granted for the sale has now been revoked or whether it is open-ended and can be used at any future date in case negotiations are resumed.

We understand from a letter to the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility that "no assurances were sought that such aircraft are not used for military purposes." 39 The Minister explained that this would not be necessary because the intended sale concerned commercial aircraft.

We submit that such assurances would not make sense if the military purpose of the sales was explicit. It is precisely in the case of commercial aircraft sales to a military government engaged in major human rights violations that such assurances are needed to satisfy Canada's undoubted concern that such aircraft should not be used for troop or police transport. Thus, it is really only in those cases where items may have a dual purpose that the regulations and policy guidelines of the Export Import Permit Act, the Export Control List and government policy should require assurances about the ultimate use of the item for which an export permit is sought. The nature of the Guatemalan and other governments, publicly chastized by Canada in the United Nations for their continued human rights violations, would seem to us to require such assurances prior to the issuance of an export permit.

We thus renew our October recommendation and ask that the government of Canada establish a mandatory review through a case by case examination of export permit applications for export of all military equipment to countries, like El Salvador and Guatemala, which have been cited by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for gross and systematic violations of human rights. We further reiterate that exports to such countries of any item, component or part which can be used as an instrument for torture, extra-judicial executions and abuse of citizens cease. 40

38 Letter from the Hon. Gerald Regan to the Task Force on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility, March 5th, 1984.

39 Ibid.

40 We would understand such a ban to include small arms as well as more significant military equipment, crowd control material, torture devices, police and prison hardware, data processing systems, surveillance devices, vehicles and counter insurgency equipment, training and services for security forces.

In October we recommended that the Government of Canada recognize and reinforce Canadian non-governmental aid channels for people-to-people aid in Central America, indicating our concern that reference to such agencies of repressive governments as the National Reconstruction Committee of Guatemala may place humanitarian workers in jeopardy.

The Minister replied in March that our remarks "arise more from suspicion than hard facts."

Our initial statement about the National Reconstruction Committee of Guatemala is not simply based on our "suspicions" but rather on petitions made to us by our Guatemalan development partners. The latter have specifically requested us not to submit their programs to CIDA for matching funds because they know this will mean monitoring of the projects by the Guatemalan government, which could in turn place both the project and development workers in jeopardy. It is well known that authoritarian military regimes have little sympathy for grass roots development programs, especially those which attempt to organize peasants and workers for the purpose of meeting basic needs.

As proof of the repression unleashed by the Guatemalan government against local NGOs we cite the recent enclosed Oxfam America Report, Witness to Political Violence in Guatemala -- the Suppression of a Rural Development Movement. We would also refer the Department to the Report of the Canadian Inter-Church Fact-Finding Mission to Guatemala and Mexico, August-September 1983: Why Don't They Hear Us? for details and specific incidents of gross human rights violations in Guatemala.

We therefore strongly advocate that the Canadian government maintain a policy of confidentiality vis-a-vis the activities of local NGOs which receive CIDA matching funds in countries where Government or Government-related forces are known to have carried out repressive measures against local NGOs and grass roots development workers. In the case of Guatemala, we understand that the Canadian Embassy is obliged to inform the National Reconstruction Committee about the development projects it supports, through M.A.F. allocations. Given the extremely negative track record of the Guatemalan government in the area of human rights violations, such information may endanger both the development projects, and worse still, the lives of humanitarian workers in Guatemalan agencies. We are aware of one major humanitarian church agency in Guatemala which can no longer channel international funds for humanitarian activities because of its refusal to submit its projects to the National Reconstruction Committee for prior screening.

REFUGEES *

The refugee situation in Central America is increasingly precarious due to continuing militarization in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. The growing burden of refugees in Mexico requires continual monitoring of Canada's immigration and assistance levels to ensure sensitive, appropriate and timely support for Mexico.

Refugees in Temporary Situations

In October we recommended that the government of Canada strongly resist the relocation of Guatemalan and Salvadorean refugees in Honduras. (R1)

In March, the Minister replied noting that the Government of Honduras had agreed not to relocate refugees without prior consultation and that to date, there is no evidence that it will not adhere to this commitment. The Canadian government would support action by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in this regard, seeking the best solutions possible, bearing in mind the refugees self-sufficiency and security.

We hope that the Minister's April 1984 stay in Honduras will have led to the clear identification of the concerns expressed by the churches. We urge that the government of Canada join with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies 41 and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation 42 in pressing the UNHCR not to proceed with relocation as presently planned. It is not that we are opposed to the UNHCR policy of relocation away from border areas. We simply do not believe that the usual UNHCR conditions for a durable solution can be met internally in an increasingly militarized Honduras. For the refugees who seek to explore other options, who have a deep understanding of their security situation, and who are strongly united in their opposition to the move, the relocation does not make sense. If UNHCR conditions cannot be met, it does not make sense to us either.

In October, we recommended that the Canadian government actively support an increased UNHCR budget for Mexico to a level of \$12 million for 1984. (R2)

The Minister in March replied that "we fully support the UNHCR's efforts and we will continue to urge them to dedicate the maximum available funds to this area... Canada has raised its contributions to the UNHCR to \$3 million in the present fiscal year from \$2.25 million in 1982-83."

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The refugee policy section of this response has been prepared with the assistance of information provided by the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees.

41 Report of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies Consultation, Nym, Suisse, January 23-26, 1984.

42 Board of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Resolution, March, 1984.

We are pleased with Canada's commitment, but the situation in Mexico is extremely serious and the Mexico program receives less per capita in UNHCR than any country in the region. It is surprising to note that in 1983, UNHCR estimated 160,000 refugees in Mexico and allocated \$7.5 million for 1984, whereas 35,000 refugees were estimated in Honduras and the 1984 allocation was \$12 million.⁴³ At a time when special recognition is being given to the adverse impact of the African refugee burden on African development plans, we must also recognize the impact of similar burdens on Mexico in our own hemisphere. The numbers of Guatemalan refugees in southern Mexico are increasing: there are increasingly frequent incursions across the border and into camps by the Guatemalan armed forces with murderous results. There are increasing numbers of Salvadorean and Guatemalan refugees around and in Mexico City. Mexico's traditional humanitarian response and resources are under great stress. There are disturbing plans to relocate camps in southern Mexico in ways which would seriously injure the community relations and cultural identity of the Guatemalan refugees.

Given these factors, the \$7.5 million allocation planned by the UNHCR will not be adequate to the needs. Canada must be prepared to make supplementary grants to the UNHCR designated for Mexico during 1984.

Internally Displaced Refugees

In October we recommended that emergency assistance to internally displaced refugees in El Salvador and Guatemala be provided only through the channels provided by the Canadian and international non-governmental sector. (R3)

In March the Minister replied that since bilateral aid has been suspended to these countries funds are allocated to reliable non-governmental organizations and the International Red Cross.

As we have pointed out above, we reiterate that because of the use of aid by government and military forces as threat and means of control, government to government transfers continue to be highly problematic. Further, transfers from the Canadian government to local non-governmental organizations through Mission Administered Funds increase the danger of control and monitoring for such local bodies hampering their effectiveness.

Refugees in Flight

In our October submission we recommended the reinforcement of Canadian immigration policy so that refugees are selected on the basis of protection as a priority factor and to facilitate the admission to Canada of extraordinary groups of Salvadoreans, including political prisoners in need of interviews for admission to Canada, those inside El Salvador seeking asylum under threat of death or disappearance, and political prisoners transferred to Mexico who have short term tourist visas and require immediate

⁴³ United Nations document A/AC 96/620 pp. 220-245

processing. (R4)

In March the Minister reported frequent representations on behalf of political prisoners not released under amnesty, and willingness to accept those who desire resettlement in Canada. The Minister went on to outline the special program for Salvadorean political prisoners instituted by Canada and the government's openness to Salvadoreans who wish to join family members already in Canada. The Minister also indicated the possible use of Minister's Permits to assist refugees to leave Mexico in cases of urgency.

We are pleased that the government continues to recognize the plight of extraordinary groups of Salvadoreans and indeed of other nations who are threatened. However, any efforts to aid special groups depends on adequate admission levels in Canada. We are extremely concerned about the inadequacy of target levels for Latin American resettlement. 44 In 1983 the level was used up by September, leaving hundreds of Salvadoreans waiting in precarious situations. The extreme seriousness of the situation has not yet received an adequate refugee level response. We therefore recommend the immediate release of 1,000 of the 2,000 contingency places to raise the Latin American program capacity.

Guatemala

In October we recommended that Guatemala continue to be a visa-exempt country. (R5)

In March the Minister indicated that visas were now imposed.

We strongly protest the recent imposition by Canada of a visa requirement for Guatemalans. We have noted the general departmental practice of imposing a visa requirement along with a Special Program, with the reason given to "provide for refugee selection in the country of origin." 45 This is particularly inappropriate for Guatemala. Here, the dangers are extremely great for both embassy staff and for those at high risk who are trying to flee. There is little evidence of abuse of the Inland Determination Procedures in Canada by Guatemalan claimants. Even during 1983, before Canada fully acknowledged the serious human rights situation in the country, and the number of inland refugee claimants was modest, the success rate was high. The government must reconsider the imposition of the visa requirement in this case.

45 Brief of the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees, to the Minister of Employment and Immigration, March, 1984.

46 Speaking notes of the Minister of Employment and Immigration speaking before the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration (Immigration Main Estimates, 1984-1985).

CONCLUSION

We appreciate the seriousness with which the Minister and the Government have taken our presentations and recommendations. We have commended actions taken since October regarding Contadora, human rights, lines of credit and refugees. Our reply indicates that there are many initiatives which remain to be taken. We trust that the dialogue over these and related matters will continue in the near future, with the Minister of External Affairs. In conclusion we wish to stress our conviction that the security and well-being of Canadians will be best served when fundamental social justice, respect for human rights and peace are won in Central America. Too much fear and distortion has been cast into the air by privileged and powerful spokespersons in positions of military and political authority in Central America and the United States. These advocates of military solutions, war and repression would have North Americans fear foreign-inspired conspiracies and on occasion stoop to outright racism in their arguments for military interventionist policies. They claim that their objective is to win "security". Such arguments ignore both the positive will to justice and the capability for autonomous models of development on the part of the peoples of Central America. They ignore the history of foreign military and intelligence intervention, largely from United States sources, which these people have suffered and the decades of dictatorship sponsored by those interventions. They ignore the grinding poverty and repression which has too long been the lot of the majority in Central America. Against this repressive and powerful ignorance we advocate guidelines to policy which must be measured by fundamental social justice, and energetic initiatives motivated by a hope which is rooted in the spirit of our faith.

In the most obscure and sordid place,
in the most hostile and harshest
in the most corrupt
and nauseating places,
there you do Your work.
That is why your Son
descended into hell,
in order to transform what IS NOT
and to purify that which IS BECOMING.
This is hope!

Julia Esquivel ⁴⁷

47 "Hope" by Julia Esquivel from Threatened with Resurrection, Elgin, The Brethren Press, 1982.

The following denominations and religious orders are members of the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America:

Anglican Church of Canada
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Canadian Council of Churches
Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada
Lutheran Church in America-Canada Section
Presbyterian Church of Canada
United Church of Canada
Society of Friends (Quakers)
Canadian Religious Conference - Ontario
Jesuit Fathers (Upper Canada Section)
Scarboro Foreign Mission Society
The School Sisters of Notre Dame
The Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto

Participants in the development of this brief:

Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace
Comité chrétien pour les droits humains en Amérique latine
Inter-Church Committee for Refugees
Inter-Church Committee for World Development Education
Inter-Church Fund for International Development
The Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility

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